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AUTHOR Hepworth, H. Philip
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ABSTRACT

In a time of economic crisis, Canadians are questioning their social institutions. Major welfare programs may be dismantled under political pressure. Canadians should be cautious, though, in accepting radical, new ideas. Long-term interests may be damaged by planners' reliance on short-term social indicators. Our perceptions of social phenomena are conditioned by immediate surroundings, social agencies and mass media. Apparent change and new conditions may not be so pervasive when a long-range view is taken. For example, despite considerable social change, there has been continuity in the family. Reporters and researchers should trace linkages between social structures and local patterns of events to provide an accurate image of society. Social intervention should be based on broad social programs as has been done in the case of education. Early child health and early childhood education services should be attached to the universal education system rather than to separate agencies which operate on a case-by-case basis. Now, while the pressure of population growth is reduced, Canadians can improve their educational and social service programs rather than dismantle them. We should provide educational opportunities as a parent gives love, without stipulations, without expectation of gratitude, without automatic economic return. Substantial monthly payments to families with children should be provided. (Author/RH)

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CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY IN AN ANXIOUS SOCIETY: SETTING FEASIBLE GOALS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A paper prepared for presentation to
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H. Philip Hepworth
Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Work
University of Regina

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Synopsis

Child and Family Policy in an Anxious Society: Setting Feasible Goals for Social and Economic Development

At a time of much social and economic uncertainty in Canada and the world, a variety of circumstances is forcing us to reappraise our values, our lifestyle and our future courses of action. Immediate economic and financial circumstances are bringing cutbacks in social and educational programs without any adequate assessment being made of the consequences. Yet the evidence of the challenges facing Canada and in fact all other countries suggests a need for a far-sighted approach to social and economic development.

No where is this breadth of vision more needed than in the basic social arrangements we make for children and families. Despite major changes the family remains the basic social unit in our society. It provides the setting in which early child care is given and it sustains children throughout their early life. The school shares with the family many of the important tasks of education and socialization. Family and school are thus important transmitters of social values, but they also play a role as agents of social change. They have the job of relating to a changing world. In the institutions of the family and the school there is a necessary tension between tradition and change.

If the family and school are important agents of socialization, they are at the same time the key contributors of the trained and educated citizens of the future. The family and school must therefore be forward-looking institutions alive both to the realities of the present and the possibilities of the future. Times of crisis in the past have often been the spur for the planning of a better tomorrow. Our present anxieties provide an opportunity for appraising our basic social arrangements and working out answers to some of the challenges that confront us. In all of this the family and the school are important institutions. On their continued health and effectiveness depends much of our future.

Child and Family Policy in an Anxious Society

In one sense the International Year of the Child could not have come at a worse time. In the western world we face the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. In the Third World there is chronic poverty, growing population and a worsening refugee problem. In Communist countries we see the problems less clearly, but we do see child care and education systems using considerable regimentation and indoctrination of children. But are our own systems different?

This International Year should make us take stock of our own institutions concerned with children at the local, provincial and national levels. If I hear my own young children correctly, they do not think the International Year has made any difference to them. Prior to leaving Ottawa in 1978 I was involved in efforts to get 400 or more national agencies concerned with children to work together to celebrate this International Year. It was an uphill struggle, and along the way I fear the welfare of children was forgotten as agencies jockeyed for position on the Canadian Commission for I.Y.C. I am not convinced we have an effective advocate for children in Canada. We certainly have no serious national research body concerned with children.

All of these circumstances should drive us to examine our basic values and to question some of the assumptions on which we have built our countries. We are being challenged to ask what life is all about. What are the motivations of human behaviour? What are our own goals and objectives. In this quest for truth, we may find no answers. It is a risk worth taking; it is the journey not the arrival that matters.

We are challenged by radical thinkers on the right and the left. Often their ideological positions are indistinguishable. Much of what Ivan Illich says is strangely reminiscent of Milton Friedman.[1,2] Both are in some ways concerned with the enslavement of the human spirit by the very institutions mankind has built for itself. At the same time radical criticism of social institutions can be destructive and anarchical. We want to criticize modern medicine and the bureaucracies that surround it. But do we really want to be without them when the time comes to have an operation or bear a baby. Illich's

general position seems to be that the cure is worse than the disease.[3] That is also what Florence Nightingale found when she first visited the hospitals at Scutari. Friedman criticises the education system for "an excess of conformity."

> "Our problem is to foster diversity, and the alternative would do this far more effectively than a nationalized school system."[4]

There is much that is attractive in these ideas. Their full or even partial application would in my view be disastrous. In the western world we are now in the middle of a vast economic experiment with monetarism, which may ultimately be successful in containing inflation. But combined with the effects of the energy crisis this experiment makes the prospect of another depression no longer unthinkable. Along the way we risk devastating unemployment and the dismantling of major social programs it has taken us generations to build.

Questioning of social institutions is good, but there is a risk in doing so that we often bring about that which we most fear. We assume that the family is having a bad time, and yea verily, the family is in decline. We become victims of our own rhetoric, our own anxieties, our own self-fulfilling prophecies.

A phenomenon often noted in North America is a willingness to tear down what seem perfectly respectable buildings, and to build new, less interesting edifices in their place. We are prone to do this with our social institutions. Our self-questioning, our navel gazing, is a kind of self-doubt, a lack of self-confidence. We assume that change is good for its own sake. We assume that social change occurs and should occur more rapidly than in fact it does. We assume that what is happening today has not happened before.

Technological change has of course been rapid in the past century. Given the resources it may become more so. In turn our basic social structures have responded to changing social and economic conditions. We are also now aware that a very wide range of factors has to be taken into account when a country plans its future. As C. Wright Mills said twenty years ago "The history that now affects man is world history."[5]

Yet at the same time there has also been much continuity of human values and human motivations. Human beings have always shown a remarkable ability to adapt to changing conditions, and they still do. We need not fear that we have lost the knack. At the same time we do not have to start tearing down our social institutions simply because a radical thinker calls for drastic change, or a minister of finance wants to balance his budget, or because we find it difficult to evaluate the achievements of our present programs.

Innovation, whether progressive or regressive, can have unintended consequences.[6] Sometimes we must try to work out some of these consequences before we introduce new policies. Sometimes also we really should accept that some truths are self-evident, and should not be tampered with.

In urging caution before the introduction and acceptance of new ideas I may have branded myself a conservative. But the novelty of new ideas should not blind us to the reactionary content of some current proposals for reordering major federal and provincial social programs.[7,8] I am trying to point to the difference between change and progress. Change for its own sake may not be particularly profitable, or, to use a jargon word, cost-effective.

We are in the middle of a swing to the right in political and economic thinking. We are caught in a reaction to, even a backlash against, many of the social developments of the last thirty years. We should think carefully before dismantling the major supports of the welfare state.

We are concerned in this conference with progress, the positive side of social and economic change. Yet we recognize that just as there are people who would change social arrangements too rapidly, there are others who are often reluctant to change. To this latter group the past is often more reassuring than the future. In this dilemma we may find some comfort from old people. I attended a meeting recently at which a 72 year old man from Poland asked why the young today were so pessimistic. He was responding to the despondency of a young English academic, who had been bemoaning the cuts in social programs made by the new Conservative Government in Britain.

My Polish friend could look back on a lifetime of poverty, of war, and social privation. Throughout history Poland has been the crossroads of warring armies. Yet in his old age he saw much cause for optimism. The social, cultural and spiritual vitality of modern Poland may be a sign that all is not yet lost in the continuing confrontation of the East and the West. After a year in office a Polish Pope reminds us that there are different kinds of conservatism, and that the battle between material and spiritual values is a world-wide phenomenon.

Mankind has not in my view ever abandoned its social institutions precipitately. The family may be changing, but it is not disappearing. Even the extended family, if there has ever been such an institution in modern society, is not extinct. By family we mean ongoing reciprocal social relationships between blood relatives, and those related by marriage or adoption. Despite social and geographic mobility, family ties are remarkably enduring.

The family may of course be smaller. As recently as the end of the Second World War Canada was still a country of large families.[9] This was a reflection in part of the massive immigration from European countries in the early years of this century. It was also a reflection of age-old family traditions. Improved material standards, better health services and better nutrition first enabled larger families to survive, and then following a world-wide pattern prosperity led to a decline in family size.

There was always a price to be paid for large families, many mothers lost in child birth, poor living conditions, and long working hours. We should not romanticize the past, and we should not even at this late date be deceived by Victorian propaganda about the sanctity of the family. In earlier centuries there are strong indications that the nuclear rather than the extended family was the norm in western societies. We should recognize therefore that despite enormous social changes there has been remarkable continuity in the basic social institution of the family.[10]

In the past too there were large numbers of single parent families due to high mortality rates, death in child birth and so on. Today despite rising divorce rates, remarriages have risen enormously, and the basic union on which families are based, the institution of marriage itself, is more prevalent than in the past. And even informal liaisons perpetuate a practice of the past. We should not therefore misinterpret the social phenomena we see before us. But none of this is to deny that some of these changes may constitute structural issues for our kind of society. What perhaps we can say is that there are discernible links with the past and with the future, and that we cannot spell out their full significance.

If we take a phenomenon such as child abuse we can see how easy it is to misinterpret short-term indicators. What evidence do we really have that child abuse is increasing?[11,12] The statistics provided by child abuse registers are inconclusive, inconsistent from year to year in the same province, and different definitions, reporting arrangements and practices apply between provinces. Even figures for child deaths or for prosecution and conviction of abusing parents provide no guide. These last figures are minute by comparison with the number of abuse reports or cases of reported neglect.

Child abuse registers demonstrate the extraordinary difficulty of defining neglect and abuse. Rising numbers of cases in the early years after a register has been established reflect the process of implementing a new program; they are not a reflection of an increase in the incidence of child abuse. It is however true that most provinces have higher proportions of their child population in the care of the child welfare services, than they did twenty years ago. But during this period the child welfare services have grown, while the number of births and the number of children have fallen. We have a situation then of an expanding service able to reach out to a child population at risk, but not previously served.[13]

In the area of abuse and neglect there are no easy answers. Provinces like British Columbia and Ontario have been able tc place more emphasis on preventive approaches in their child welfare services, but then run the risk

that by not intervening more drastically at an earlier stage in the family situation they leave the children at risk for a longer period of time. The rhetoric of the last ten years has been to leave the family unit intact. Inevitably some tragedies have resulted.

We cannot explain away the problem of child abuse by such examples, but we can recognize that the way child abuse comes to our attention does not itself reflect worsening family conditions. C. Wright Mills points out that the larger institutions of society may have a more grievous effect on the life of individual human beings than "the intimate environments of childhood."[14]

"When we understand social structures and structural changes as they bear upon more intimate scenes and experiences, we are able to understand the causes of individual conduct and feelings of which men in specific milieux are themselves unaware."[15]

David Gil has made essentially the same point in his writings on child abuse.[16] Our perceptions of child abuse as of other social phenomena are conditioned by our immediate surroundings, by our own social agencies and by the mass media. Yet all of these are an inadequate guide to understanding. The mass media are particularly prone to elevate and generalize the local and trivial into some kind of national, even international statement, which may be based on false assumptions.[17] This is not unlike the American national baseball finals being called the World Series. The tendency is seen in magazines like Macleans or Homemaker. In one recent issue of Homemaker all the sources consulted in an article on child welfare were based in Toronto. In my job in Ottawa I was often asked by representatives of the media to pontificate on major issues relating to human behaviour or social services across Canada. It is not surprising if the general public extrapolate from the superficial comments of supposed experts that we have an epidemic of child abuse, divorce and so on. The spread of such concerns around the world is what one Hungarian commentator has called the international contagion of ideas.[18]

The challenge facing good journalists and good social researchers lies in tracing linkages between the structure of a society, or even of many nations, and the pattern of events at the local level.

As I indicated earlier Illich sees the professions as themselves being illness producing agencies.[19] In the case of child welfare what we have to offer when we intervene in families may in the long run do more harm than good, precisely because we cannot take all relevant factors into account. Either the information is not available, or the appropriate and necessary resources. Yet in many cases of child neglect or abuse we cannot and should not adopt a hands-off approach. There are conditions for children in some families that are appalling and intolerable. What we should look for though are solutions and provisions broader than intervention on a selective case by case basis. Here I think universal education and the school have a major role to play. Precisely because we have universality, it is possible to think of the school as a basic organizing principle for the care of all children.[20] Early child health and early childhood education services should be attached to the universal education system. Preventive health and social services could be best provided there. Child welfare services could also be linked to the education system. We might then begin to have a concept of children's services.

The universal education system has or has had the great advantage of community relatedness. I think this advantage has rarely been fully exploited. Instead our different social agencies including the schools have stayed behind their agency walls. There has been a loss of communication and a waste of resources. Increased community relatedness could be an answer to the increasing centralization of provincial education departments. We need community participation within broad provincial guidelines. I am not for one minute advocating parochialism. Rather I am talking about more accountability and participation at the local level within an overall framework of universality.

Does any of this provide a basis for looking at children and economic and social progress? I hope I will be forgiven for having some qualms about such terms as investing in children, human resources, and so on. This terminology comes from a materialist world, whether capitalist or communist. But education is concerned with much more then children as future members of the work-force.[21,22]

The school, like the family, is a formative environment, one which can be facilitating or stultifying, one in which many of the activities of later life are first performed. We can make much of the formal structure of the school setting, but the wealth of informal relationships and interactions may be much more important. The school carries on the socialization processes started in the family.

The school, like the family, is caught between the pressures of tradition and change. It is caught, as I do not need to tell you, in the grip of broad demographic trends. We have today some 100,000 fewer babies born every year, than we did twenty years ago. The baby boom reached its peak in 1959; the crest of the wave is already the young adult population of today.

But what of the teachers? I was reminded pretty forcibly this summer of the aging process, when I accompanied my wife to her high school reunion in Powell River. Quite a number of the young teachers of the early 1950s are still in the same school today. You may say this is not surprising. But what one teacher said was illuminating. "We struggle to be as energetic and enthusiastic as we were then. It is not always easy."

I was again recently reminded of this aging process, this time in the university setting. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has tried to sketch out a five year plan for its funding of academic and research endeavours.[23] It points out that student enrolments may be declining and teaching positions may already be filled by tenured teachers, but unless new, younger staff are recruited, especially good researchers, there will be no solid core of Canadian university teachers in the early 1990s. If that happens we shall be back where we started in the early 1960s with the need to recruit from abroad, but the implications of course are much wider.

Perhaps the essence of this argument is the need to maintain a high degree of youthfulness and relevance in our social institutions, and especially in our schools. What is obviously needed in schools as in universities is the capacity to mediate and interpret what is going on in the world. Again like the family, the school should be an environment both protective and stimulating, facilitating and supportive.

The education system therefore may be the victim of its own aging process. The post-war period until the early 1970s was one of continuous expansion, of rising to meet new challenges as the baby boom passed through the schools. Even after the peak of the wave passed through it was possible to think of improved staffing ratios, more facilities and so on. The same situation applied in the child welfare services. That situation of consolidation and improvement has passed. Instead inflation and recession have become dominant in our minds.

Yet Canada is still a growing country.[24,25] Even without a massive new baby boom the arrival of the 1959 wave into young adulthood means a steady stream of children into the education system. All the more need therefore for avoiding drastic cutbacks in education services.

Another observation relating to the present efforts to trim education programs applies to perceptible deficiencies which should be remedied. I refer in particular to the observations of the 1976 O.E.C.D. Examiners review of Canadian education policies.[26] They point out that with a few honourable exceptions the task of providing full educational opportunities to handicapped children has been grievously neglected.[27] My ten year old daughter included the following lines in a speech in French for the International Year of the Child.

"Let us not forget the handicapped. These individuals also want to develop their personal abilities. School is for them also. And they demand respect."

The O.E.C.D. examiners said they heard "a steady refrain of criticism about the inadequate provisions for the handicapped."[28] They also commented on socially disadvantaged children [29] and native children. They discussed at length bilingualism and the needs of minority language groups.[30] They mentioned children with artistic talent [31] and the need for a more adequate program of physical education.[32]

I mention these matters simply as areas which need improvement. I submit the time to make improvements is when the pressure of numbers is reduced.

You may ask what all this has to do with social and economic progress. Again I think the O.E.C.D. examiners put their finger on the problem. They identified a love affair that has gone sour.

" . . . it is fairly obvious that the massive federal support to higher education in the late 1960s was mainly motivated by faith in education as an important factor in economic growth. Present doubts about the value of continued support on this scale are not caused by any failure of the programme . . . It is reasonably clear that present doubts about the continuation of financial support for post-secondary education stem from a loss of faith in education as a direct promoter of immediate economic growth . . . "[33]

Basically the Examiners felt that education was always seen as a tool for "something else", as an instrument of "manpower policy, general economic policy, regional development policy, science research policy, social policy, foreign policy, and so forth."[34]

Again I think the Examiners identified something important when they suggest that some of the loss of faith in education is "possibly reinforced by the fairly global disenchantment in established circles about the behaviour of students and intellectuals."[35]

I mentioned, earlier, different types of conservative. I think we have to recognize in the swing to the right quite irrational elements, deeply reactionary behaviour, a male backlash against female liberation, and quite intolerable paternalism towards the young. We may also have to recognize that much of this irrationality is against a background of increased rationalization, increased bureaucratization, increased professionalization and so on. I have made it something of a hobby in my various jobs to watch the behaviour of the boss. What I have observed is that it is sometimes the boss who does not abide by the rules of his or her organization, thereby of course causing turmoil for people further down the line. This indiscipline on the part of the boss reflects I think the organizational and interorganizational pressures bearing upon people in responsible jobs. The strain becomes too much; thus an excess of rationality or rational behaviour may lead to quite irrational consequences; "increased rationality may not be assumed to make for increased freedom."[36]

Mills draws a useful distinction between rationality and reason.

"The increasing rationalization of society, the contradiction between such rationality and reason, the collapse of the assumed coincidence of reason and freedom - these developments lie back of the rise into view of the man who is 'with' rationality but without reason, who is increasingly self-rationalized and also increasingly uneasy. It is in terms of this type of man that the contemporary problem of freedom is best stated."[37]

Perhaps we have to accept the fact that in this rational but unreasonable world the young are finding their own way, through the educational process, through sexual liberation, through unemployment, to some sort of viable modus vivendi with an uncertain future. We can choose to stay with them in this quest, in spirit if not in body, or we can choose to carp, and criticize and resist. Everyone tells me that if I find my young children difficult to handle now, wait till they are teenagers. Well I expect some anxious moments. But I think our task as parents, as teachers, as social workers, is to stay with the young, to keep strong our relationships with them, not in a restraining way, but rather in a supportive way, to be as the French would say a "point de repere."
"An educator must begin with what interests the individual most deeply, even if it seems altogether trivial and cheap. He must proceed in such a way and with such materials as to enable the student to gain increasingly rational insight into these concerns, and into others he will acquire in the process of education. And the educator must try to develop men and women who can and who will by themselves continue what he has begun: the end product of any liberating education is simply the self-educating, self-cultivating man and woman; in short, the free and rational individual."[38]

We are back I think to the question of what life is all about. The O.E.C.D. Examiners suggested that a strictly utilitarian approach to education was inappropriate. We should provide educational opportunities as a parent gives love, without stipulations, without expectation of gratitude, without automatic economic return.

The research evidence for the efficacy of education as a promoter of economic growth is limited. An early effort by the Economic Council of Canada did not produce definitive evidence of cause and effect between investment in education and national economic performance.[39] I think myself we look for results far sooner than we have any real reason to expect them. If for example the peak of the baby boom is only now going through higher education, and if the young people born before 1959 are still fairly newly employed, it is not really surprising that the effect of investment in education is not visible.

But all of this is assuming that cause and effect relationships can be established in areas as complex as education and the economy. It is obvious at a more detailed level that matching students and manpower requirements is extremely difficult even when academic qualifications and job specifications can be related. In some scientific disciplines Canada has a glut of Doctors of Philosophy. But in many trades requiring technical skills of a high order Canada is and has been traditionally short of trained manpower.

Again the O.E.C.D. Examiners have some trenchant criticisms to make. They point out that vocational-technical schools are often concerned more with therapeutic than technical ends. They go on to say

"If a sizeable number of students can be helped (i.e. in separate vocational technical schools) by being given confidence in their own capacities once again, this seems to indicate: - a lack of proper guidance in the regular schools, for the students usually arrive in the schools (i.e. separate vocational technical schools) after having received a number of repeated checks that have strongly affected them. - certain weakness in the composite schools, as they are generally conceived and organized in Canada. They apparently are not successful in achieving their goal of providing <u>all</u> children with the education that best fits them . . . A section of the school population is being given short shrift."[40]

I quote this comment not simply as a criticism, but rather to suggest that there is a need in the economy for workers with good technical training. Yet vocational-technical schools at the local level have often been identified as places to send problem children. I speak now from my own experience as a family counsellor. But the problem is wider than this. It is quite obvious that many young people graduate from school with little aptitude for further academic work, and few opportunities to learn a trade. These young people are not socially

disadvantaged as we usually understand the term. They come often from comfortable, middle class homes, have experienced few material wants, but have open to them only a variety of unskilled jobs, or no jobs at all.

What I would like to stress here is not the utilitarian aspect of schools producing trained workers for the work-force, but rather the need to help young people make a fairly smooth transition into satisfying and rewarding work. There is a need to relate the adult world and the school world. There is a need to avoid labelling children as misfits or failures.[41] There is a need to help young people make the most of themselves and of their opportunities.

I have been involved at a number of times in my working life with children and young people, who have been the victims of the system. I think neither in the education nor the social work field are we particularly successful with these damaged children. The O.E.C.D. Examiners spoke of "school injury";[42] this Illich-like phrase could also be applied to child welfare services. On the one hand we come in contact with damaged children, on the other our own efforts may cause further damage. Additionally we may cause damage where none existed before. In social work as in education we are not always sure about the efficacy of our methods. We may follow appropriate procedures, but the end results may be often less than ideal.

The current economic crisis has brought home to us the close interconnection of economic policy and social policy. What is also involved is government management of its revenues. We are in a position now where failures of fiscal management are blamed on our social programs. The loss of control of government expenditures at least at the federal level is ascribable in my view to problems in the machinery of government and the political process.[43] We may wish to quarrel with the design of social programs but their original objectives retain their validity. We do need some form of universal income security; we do need a universal health system; we do need a universal education system.

There has been some talk recently at the national level that our social programs have not solved the problem of poverty.[44,45] Were they ever designed to do so? Was this ever a realistic objective? Poverty in any case is an elastic concept.[46] It is useful to make a distinction between absolute and relative poverty, but value judgements are involved in establishing such standards.

What one finds when one studies social assistance caseloads is a large proportion, about 40 per cent, of single parent, usually mother led families. Another large proportion are people with long term physical and mental disabilities. The smallest group are able-bodied people without unemployment benefits. But the interesting thing is that where there is work, the turnover of single parents and the able-bodied is very rapid.

Given the degree of mobility that we do have in the social assistance caseload, and given the types of recipients, it is apparent that low income may result from long-term disabling conditions, short-term circumstances, or low wages. Much the larger part of relative poverty in Canada is likely to result from low wages. Unemployment or the lack of job opportunities do of course pose serious problems. The tightening of unemployment insurance requirements has some effect in terms of increasing social assistance caseloads. The net benefit to society is not obvious. Again we have a classic example of blaming the victim [47] and the social program, when the problem lies in the management of the economy. What we have is a reassertion of the old Poor Law principle of lesser eligibility - that is that social benefits will be provided, but they will neither be adequate nor easy to accept.

What does all of this have to do with children? Well of course many children are present in low-income families. The indignities their parents suffer have repercussions direct and indirect on these children. The problem with tight restrictions on unemployment insurance or social assistance is that such policies are indiscriminate in their application. What makes sense in one area does not make sense in another. Where marriages break down, maintenance payments are often low or paid only irregularly, and enforcement of court orders often then only places stress on new family arrangements and the children involved.

The issue of child day care services is another area where public policy faces in opposite directions at the same time. What I think has happened in the last fifteen years in Canada is that the steady increase in the number and proportion of mothers in the labour market, coupled with the women's liberation movement broadly defined, led to increased demand for child day care services.

The increase in publicly regulated provision was steady, but not spectacular. There has been a slight decline in the last two years. In 1975 I estimated that a quarter of children under six had working mothers, that was 600,000 children.[48] Today a higher proportion of the 2,000,000 or so children under six have working mothers. There are roughly 80,000 day care spaces and something under 400,000 children enrolled in pre-elementary or kindergarten classes in the education system.

In his 1977 study of day care policy for the Ontario Economic Council, Krashinsky argued that identifying the potential demand for day care places in the way I have just done is if not wrong, inappropriate.[49] He asks the question "How should subsidies best be directed in order to reach the families most in need without resulting in perverse behaviour by the people in question."[50] He does not define perverse.

He says he is concerned to argue this last point in terms of economic efficiency and equity. Basically he says public subsidy of child day care is an inefficient form of income redistribution. He advocates instead a voucher system "to reach children irrespective of whether or not their parents worked and used institutional day care."[51]

He goes on to conclude

"Day care is a very emotional issue. This must not lead the analyst into errors of logic. Inefficient programs that fail to deal adequately with the very problems they were designed to solve and that will waste limited resources must be avoided."[52]

Krashinsky is an economist, but makes suitable nods in the direction of the care that young children need. His study of subsidized day care services as a means of income redistribution could be paralleled by a similar study of universal education programs. In fact of course his voucher proposal is similar to one proposed by Friedmann for the education system. Suppose however that income redistribution is not the primary or sole objective of subsidized day care, then in my view Krashinsky's arguments are not relevant to a public debate about day care policy. Suppose rather that child day care is about caring for children. Krashinsky shows himself that opposite effects can be achieved through

the use of subsidies.

" . . . a subsidy can affect fertility in either way. More women will begin to work and tend to have smaller families; those already working may choose to enjoy children more and have larger families."[53]

I have used this example of the interrelationship of economic and social policy to illustrate what I see to be one of the main weaknesses of cost-benefit and related types of studies. It is difficult to identify all of the relevant variables; to those that are identified it is difficult to give an appropriate numerical weighting, and often the results provide a variety of ambiguous policy options. What can however happen is that a reputable study, which I take Krashinsky's study to be, can be used by governments to justify courses of action which are not consistent with the findings or the recommendations of the particular study. Krashinsky's concern with efficient instruments of income redistribution could, I believe, be used to support the case for substantially increased family allowances, payable to all families with children, but taxed back on a progressive basis through the income tax system.

The new child tax credit introduced last year was explicitly designed to redistribute income, albeit in a very minor way, but at the same time involved an erosion of the universal family allowances, and created needless bureaucratic complexities. The relatively high take up or participation rate in the new programme should not disguise the fact that the family allowance system is more efficient in reaching all families with children. What has apparently come as a surprise to officials of Health and Welfare Canada is the high proportion of applicants actually qualifying for the new credit. In other words we have more families with low or marginal incomes than we thought.

With both child day care and family allowances we might take a leaf out of the book of many other countries. They see merit in making substantial monthly payments to families with children. They also see merit in providing parents with the option of caring for young children themselves or placing them in day care facilities without incurring serious financial hardship and loss of employment and career prospects.[54] What many countries find quite reasonable would be branded madness by the fiscal conservatives of North America. Instead we make progress on a piecemeal basis. We want women in the work-force, but blame them for neglecting their child care duties.

In seeking to comment on issues involving children of concern both to teachers and social workers I have been neither systematic nor comprehensive. I have suggested that it is beneficial to appraise our basic social arrangments. I have suggested that it is irrational to make drastic and damaging changes in our major social services, and in my definition education is a major social service. I do see an alliance between the family and the school as being the best way to promote the interests of our children. I do see the school setting as the best place for the provision of universal preventive personal health and social services for children.

We are living in anxious times, but so were our parents. Families and schools have a common responsibility - commitment to the welfare of children. Most societies in times of crisis have tried to put the interests of children first. We should try to do the same.

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